

TAPE MADE AT MEETING OF DRUID HILLS CITIZENS AT MEETING
MAY 15, 1983 attended by Delia and Roy Gilliland of DeKalb Historical
Society. I have typed this as near as I can to the original words and
procedures for this occasion.

INTRODUCTION

(DELIA GILLILAND SPEAKING)

"This is Delia Gilliland of the DeKalb Historical Society. Today is Sunday, May 15, 1983, and I am at the Shadyside Park near the intersection of Fairview Road and Ponce de Leon Avenue. Very shortly, a ceremony will begin here to celebrate the ninetieth (90th) birthday of Druid Hills. The event will be sponsored by the Druid Hills Civic Association and the Olmsted Parks Society, of Atlanta, Inc. The party will be a celebration of the discovery of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.'s preliminary design dated May 15, 1893, for the Ponce de Leon Avenue and the adjoining linear park. A reproduction of the May 15, 1893 Olmsted design will be on display. There will be a birthday cake which will be cut, and following the birthday refreshments, there will be a walk through Shadyside, Dell Wood, and Deep Dense Sections of the Ponce de Leon Park. Information will be available about the impact of the proposed expressway on the Olmsted Park and the surrounding area.

The Druid Hills citizens are justly proud of their community. The DeKalb Historical Society congratulates the citizens of Druid Hills, and may we tell you that we are delighted to be here today to celebrate this important event with you. We wish you many good, happy days ahead."

(DELIA GILLILAND SPEAKING)

We just had a nice suprise. We have an actor who is impersonating Mr. Olmsted. I'll walk over and see if he has anything to say.

(THE ACTOR)

Hi. They might treat a magnetic recording of the voice of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. with a certain grain of salt, but I would not mind repeating that, whatsoever. I feel that it's very important to make room for people in parks, to give places for people to live as well as to give places for squirrels to live and that we have to appreciate human element in addition to the concrete element.

(DELIA SPEAKING)

Those are very wise words and we agree with you entirely. Thank you, Mr. Olmsted.

(THE ACTOR)

Thank you.

(DELIA SPEAKING)

We just met the granddaughter of Mr. Joel Hurt who began all this thing in Druid (tape fades here) . She recalled how her grandfather at one time chased pigs through Druid Hills very near what is now known as the By Way. Thank you, Mrs. Fletcher.

The emphasis for today's meeting is to organize more strongly, to oppose the planned extension of Georgia 400 through the Druid Hills neighborhood. There seems to be a tremendous support for the parks today, as over one hundred people have already gathered for these festivities.

Olmsted Society President, ~~Sally~~ Harbaugh, is speaking.

(SALLY HARBAUGH SPEAKING)

...Druid Hills .. Druid Hills is the only thing in Atlanta and only one of two in the Southeast that Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. designed. Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. designed Central Park in New York, Riverside, Morningside, Prospect, Stanford University Campus, Princeton University campus- It's Princeton. Montreal. (Note. The other voice heard in the background here is the actor naming Olmsted's designs.)

(HARBAUGH continued)

And in 18--, 1890 Joel Hurt had put together a lot of land and Joel Hurt's granddaughter, Mrs. Fletcher, is ^{here} with us today and Mr. Fletcher, her husband is here. Thank you for coming. Without Joel Hurt, we could not have this beautiful park. But of course, Frederick Law Olmsted designed this as a suburb and it's one of fifty suburbs that he designed. But it is only one of two that is still left so we are trying to save this Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. park because we feel that he had a natural ?.....(tape is intelligible here) .. landscape artist...

Druid Hills continued
(SALLY HARBAUGH SPEAKING)

To me, it's like having a great masterpiece and you have to see the Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. work as an artist in a different medium. He worked with earth and the sky. This is - As he saw it, it was sort of like this and yet when the road was put in, and you can see the original map over there, the 1893 map, ..., dated May 15, 1893. So that makes it ninety years from conception till today and we're hoping that we're gonna have ninety more years and will not have any intrusion into this for the Presidential Parkway, because we have a masterpiece and if you take the Mona Lisa and you tear it in two, and you save half of it, but you've torn off part of it, what have you got left? You don't really have very much left.

(Note: An unidentified gentleman shouts HOORAH! The crowd cheers.
(Sally continues speaking.)

We just have a national treasure here and I think Atlanta has not realized the national treasure that we have. And we're very glad that Frederick Olmsted, Sr. himself has come to be with us today.

(Note: She is referring to the actor impersonating Mr. Olmsted.
The crowd laughs much.)

(Sally continues speaking.)

After they had put the land together, that's 1400 acres in 1890, Joel Hurt, and the Kirkwood Land Company, Mr. Lowery who ...?? (tape was unintelligible here), Mr. Smith, was in the Kirkwood Land Company - they put together that 1400 acres. And this was farm land and virgin timber. And they put the land together, and then Frederick Law Olmsted, who was the foremost landscape architect ... came down here, saw the land, went back, and they out, and in 1893, as I said, he drew that. And in 1894 they started doing grading but they really didn't start doing much work on it until about 1902, 1903. Of course, the really big grading work began about 1908, 1909(Tape unintelligible here).. ?? the Candler family.

Now we were gonna have a cake for everybody and we want to sing Happy Birthday, but now, Dr. Shelton, who's president of the Druid Hills Civic Association, has been, they have been lovely enough to help do all of this, to help us talking about the Druid Hills Park. And this park is one lineal park, with six sections, so when you think of it, you think of it as one park. It is one painting. It has six sections and when you think of the Night, it has a lot of figures in it. When you start thinking about tearing up the Night or tearing Mona Lisa or anything, you are tearing up a masterpiece.

Now, Dr. Shelton?

Note. Some more of the descendants of Joel Hurt are present and are introduced. They are A.B. and Mrs. Jane Simms and their daughters Jane and Anne. A.B. is the grandson of Joel Hurt.

(SALLY HARBAUGH SPEAKING)

When you read the letters between Joel Hurt and Frederick Law Olmsted, you realize the undertaking that it was, because all of this had to be moved with horse and with plow. It was not bulldozed. It was quite an undertaking, and Joel Hurt, through thick and thin, really worked at keeping the land together and at putting Druid Hills together in the design that Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. had designed. And we feel that the park belongs to the vision of Joel Hurt and Frederick Law Olmsted.

Thank y'all for coming, so much.

Dr. Shelton is gonnacut the cake for us and did you want to ? .. oh, afterwards (Note. At this point she is trying to remind us that we may take a short walk through three sections of the park. She is asking Dr. Shelton if he has anything to say, and to cut the cake. He does so.)

She continues -

Let's sing Happy Birthday to the park. Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday, Olmsted Park, Happy birthday to you. Can ya'll sing it?

Note. Crowd begins to sing. It is on the tape.

(DELIA SPEAKING)

This concludes our activities here at Shadyside. It has been an interesting and informative day, and we wish the citizens of Druid Hills great success and may they enjoy celebrating many, many more birthdays.

Taped by Delia S. Gilliland
DeKalb Historical Society Volunteer
May 15, 1983 at Shadyside Park, Ponce
de Leon & Fairview Rd.